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THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THE SPIRIT OF COMPETITION 3

FOOD FOR THOUGHT 8
"THEY ALSO SERVE"

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA 12
THE AWAKENING OF FAITH—I

THE PROMISE OF FUTURE 16

WAR AND PEACE 21

SAINT JNANESHWAR—LIFE AND TEACHINGS—IV 27

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY 32

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(c) The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THE SPIRIT OF COMPETITION

IN SOCIOLOGY, competition is defined as a rivalry between two or more persons or groups for an object desired in common, which usually results in a victor and a loser, but not necessarily involving a destruction of the latter. The spirit of rivalry is no longer restricted to sports, but is to be discerned in almost every field, without exception. As children we compete for attention of parents or elders at home and then of teachers at school. We compete with peers, at home, in school, at workplace, and in society. We compete to prove that we are equal or superior to others in a particular field.

The spirit of competition is all-pervasive. Each individual and each country is determined to be ahead of others. According to Jim Taylor, a professor at the University of San Francisco, it is the spirit of competition that has propelled Americans to win Olympic gold medals, to have the top universities, be the financial centre of the world and a leader in technological innovations. While competition is not all bad, what causes concern is that more and more activities that people participated in because they were fun or healthy or intellectually stimulating, are now being turned into competition. The writer pertinently remarks, "Whatever happened to the pure joy of dancing, singing, cooking and yoga?" Competitive reality television shows allow the viewers to *vicariously* experience the emotions of winning and losing, without having to face the highs and lows first hand. The author expresses concern: could such increased competitiveness be a reflection of a change

in America's values and priorities? It seems as if "beating and being better than others has become a national obsession, whether getting into the best schools, winning in sports, or making the most money."

There is then the question of healthy and unhealthy, or ethical and non-ethical competition. When competing firms advertise their goods, is it not sufficient to emphasize merely the merits of their goods? But instead we find that a model advertising a particular brand of soap, sweeps aside soaps of various colours and shapes, representative of soaps manufactured by other companies, and then puts on the table *the soap*, which is claimed to be superior to all others. The spirit of competition, it is felt, is likely to encourage unethical practices in the business world. In a competition we wish to surpass another's qualities or achievements. It is not a pursuit of excellence.

When we compete we are being ambitious. When we compete we compare ourselves with another. It appears that comparison is a fundamental human impulse. Whenever we meet another person, we compare, knowingly or unknowingly. In the areas where we feel we excel, the result of comparison with someone superior is depression or envy, whereas comparison with someone inferior results in a subtle satisfaction or even boosting of the ego. A normal curve in statistic is a bell-shaped curve that tapers off on two sides. The curve shows a normal distribution of data, in which majority of data points are relatively similar, with very few outliers on the higher and lower ends of the range of data. When applied to human qualities, achievements or talents, we find that majority of human beings are average or mediocre, with only a few, who are exceptionally good or bad, talented or not. If we keep this fact in mind, our first response on discovering someone superior should be admiration. It should wake us up from our complacency and motivate us to put in our best.

According to an article, "The Comparison Trap" that appeared in *Psychology Today* (November 2017), "the effects of upward and downward comparisons depend on how we process the information. Self-improvement occurs when an upward comparison inspires us to try harder." A positive comparison should expand our sense of possibility,

giving us a positive surge of energy. To derive the benefit of comparison without allowing that comparison to affect our self-esteem, one needs to remain "self-referential," says Shane Lopez, a psychologist and senior scientist at the Gallup organization. To remain "self-referential" means to allow ourselves to be moved by others while staying focused on our own path. A self-referential person does not see other successful people as competitors, because the only competitor is their own self.

This is also the spiritual view. We only need to compete with our own previous performance. We compare ourselves with others only to draw inspiration, not to outdo another or be at number one position, which is a mark of an ambitious person. Ambition is the strong determination to achieve success or distinction in a chosen field. It is desire for *personal* achievement. Ambition is not always negative, but more often than not, the ambitious person is determined to achieve the goal at any cost. Many a times, there is a willingness to compromise moral principles and override integrity. For instance, an ambitious sportsman may not have qualms about using drugs to boost his stamina, so as to win a medal.

There is a difference between ambition and aspiration. Before becoming a Buddha, in one of his far prior lives, when the Buddha was only a sweeper, he saw another Buddha, Deepankara, pass by. He was inspired by his calm and peaceful appearance, and vowed to become like him. There was no envy, no competition, and also no inferiority complex. It is this aspiration, no matter how unattainable the goal, which lifts us above our circumstances, and humdrum existence, and helps to better our lives. "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" said Robert Browning. *Light on the Path* advises us to "kill out ambition," but also asks us to "work as those work who are ambitious." An ambitious person is characterized by zeal, enthusiasm, perseverance and commitment. All these qualities are essential in a spiritual aspirant. Aspiration is a form of desire tempered by thoughtfulness, integrity and a self-interest that takes into account the interests of others. Unlike ambition, aspiration never loses sight of either the goal or the means used to attain it.

When we find ourselves comparing and competing with others for material possessions, we must practice downward-facing comparison. Whenever there is a feeling that "I do not have enough money, or I lack this or that luxury item," we must think of millions of people who live below poverty line, and of the children starving and dying of hunger. As a Christian saint has said, "I cried for boots until I saw a man who had no legs." We make the mistake of equating happiness with material prosperity. The more the things we require for being happy, the greater our chances of despair and disappointment. We often find people who are surrounded by comforts and favourable situations, and yet are unhappy, while in contrast, those who are happy often lack even the basic necessities of life. Happiness is the attitude of mind.

In a competitive race for material success, we do come across those rare few who have embraced contentment, who might appear to be laggards and complacent individuals, but they are those who refuse to follow the beaten track. They are determined to pursue their own goals at their own pace. They have decided to opt out of the rat race not because they are of weaker calibre, but because they have decided to pursue higher goals, as their quest is for peace and permanent happiness. At the base of competition there is a sense of separateness and an urge to be someone special. This spirit of competition is inculcated from childhood, where "each boy is urged to learn more quickly, to outstrip his companions, and to surpass them in every possible way. What is miscalled 'friendly rivalry' is assiduously cultivated and the same spirit is fostered and strengthened in every detail of life," writes H.P.B. This tendency is diametrically opposed to the spirit of brotherhood. A student-aspirant cannot hope to derive any spiritual benefit from his study, so long as he has not learnt to work in harmony with his fellow-students. "The *upasaka* while studying must take care to be united as the fingers on one hand" (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*). A Master of Wisdom writes: "There must be no party spirit among the band, no backbiting, no ill-will, or envy or jealousy, contempt or anger. What hurts one, ought to hurt the other—that which rejoices A must fill with pleasure B."

Competition is all about being better than the others and possessing

things that others do not have. In sum, it is an effort to be someone special. We fail to realize that each one of us is special and unique. Our self-worth is generally measured by others, and also by ourselves, on the basis of derived "self." There are experiences in life that open our eyes to the fact that our identity runs deeper than our appearance, our achievements, our ideas or feelings. Mr. Judge asks us to cultivate *higher patience*, which is a fine line between pride and humility. How shall we be proud, when we are so small? How dare we be humble when we are so great? In both we blaspheme. But between these two extremes there is a place, "neither too high nor too low," and *there* we may stand calmly, not overshadowed by any man however great, because each of us contains potentialities of every other. That *special* skill, *special* virtue or *special* power that the other person possesses, "I" also possess. "I" am not a poor, miserable sinner, either. I have the *potentiality* of creation, preservation, destruction and regeneration.

Today, to foster good competition some companies recommend striving for "co-operative competition," which suggests that by working together, team members can push (or inspire) one another to be more productive. Promod Batra, the author of "Be a Winner Everytime" gives a variant of "Hare and Tortoise" story, in which the hare and tortoise decide to run the race as friends and not rivals. The hare carried the tortoise till they came to a river bank. Then, the tortoise took over and swam across the river, with the hare on his back, till they reached the opposite shore. Once again the hare carried the tortoise on his back till they reached the finishing line together. "It is good to be individually motivated and to have strong core competencies: but unless you are able to work in a team and harness each other's core competencies, you will always perform below par, because there will always be situations in which you will do poorly and someone else will do well....When we stop competing against a rival and, instead start competing against the situation, we perform far better," writes Batra. A spiritual aspirant aims at continually improving himself, in all his aspects, "to be the better able to help and teach others."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
"THEY ALSO SERVE"

A NOBLE soul was imprisoned in the mortal body of John Milton, the English poet. After a time that body—which in youth had been of such fine texture and kept so pure that his fellow-students called him "The Lady"—that body, overworked in heavy public service, proved traitorous. His sight failed. The great plans to which as poet he had long dedicated himself had not been accomplished. They seemed impossible ever to accomplish. Not to employ his talent was like death, and now that his "light was spent," the giving of the talent to him seemed useless. The anguish of his disappointment, the continued uneasy striving in his soul, and the final patient shouldering of his burden, are all touchingly expressed in his sonnet *On His Blindness*.

Viewing himself therein as a dedicated being, astonished, hurt, puzzled that this affliction should have come upon him, he asks yearningly what he can do, "light denied?" But he knows that the inner light burns on; and since his longing to serve is even stronger than before, some way must be found to fulfil his purpose. Though he is hampered as to books and pen, yet his will, his memory, and his brooding creative power must still in some measure produce for others, must sustain and inspire them. When this feeling rises to a certainty, he pictures himself as an attendant in a great king's court; one of those whose duty it is to be ready for any instant demand, from fetching a petty bauble to opening the stately doors of the Presence Chamber before an important Embassy. Of the countless hours in his long duty-periods he spends many in doing nothing at all. These are onerous hours. Sometimes the mere heavy passing of them seems insupportable. Just to stand and wait!

But the eager saddened poet looks underneath that heavy passing and sees what he leads us to feel. Those who stand, self-supported, keen to answer an unforeseen call, ready to speed in some emergency, strong to guard in unexpected attack, willing in trifles, dependable in crisis—those it is who can obey, can execute, can truly serve.

Such attendants stand *for* the King's will, which to them means law and order; they represent, exemplify and enforce this, their highest expression of Right. To idle at their task, to loll in indifference, to sink in weariness, would be to fail. Yet they cannot run ahead of their duty, cannot be stirred to action by false enthusiasm or by the false complaint of their fellows. They must not only stand, strong in their own perceptions, but they must wait to receive orders, wait to know what the suggested service actually demands, wait till all the necessary factors are present.

Such waiting is not a mere passing of the hours. Discrimination is its very essence—mental and spiritual action, action in striving to perceive, action in preparing to execute. Such servitors are busy. They are being tested every moment. They realize the value of their task. Never are they less idle than when in this seeming state of inactivity.

Thus the poet, though staggering under a burden, fits the yoke to his shoulders and plants his feet on the upward path, with the memorable line: "They also serve who only stand and wait." The one long-sustained, swinging sentence which makes the sonnet, extracts its pure gold in that last powerful line, with its basis the image of the royal court. If the sonnet had pictured "God" as the good Law, it would be almost completely an expression of the Wisdom Teaching.

How many labouring souls have been roused by this poem and its final message to courage and endurance! Nowhere in all his voluminous work does Milton more truly deserve the praise of another great poet of kindred mind who says: "Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart," yet "...didst thou travel on life's common way, In cheerful godliness."

* * * * * * * * * * * *

John Milton was the English poet, who went blind at the age of forty-two. He had risen to the peak of his possible achievement. In his sonnet, "On His Blindness," he laments the loss of his eyesight and agonizes that his poetic talent can no longer be used to serve God. He asks, "Does God require those without light to labour?" Milton was a deeply religious man. In this poem he seems to advocate surrender to God's will. But for him "standing and waiting"

did not imply passive resignation to his fate. His blindness triggered creativity, and he wrote "Paradise Lost," which is considered to be one of the greatest epic poems in English. When the outer eye is shut from the physical world, the inner eye of mind and heart works in the dark, and discovers a whole new world.

The poem goes on to show that Patience personified appears and answers Milton's question. Patience explains that God does not need special gifts or works from man, such as Milton's writings, but loves those who "bear his mild yoke." A yoke is placed around the neck and shoulders of plowing animals, and it allows the animals to be directed around the field. Likewise, the one who has given over his life to God, and is ready to accept what God brings to him, is loved best. The word "God" must be replaced by "Law," the law of Karma.

Patience compares God to a king, who has unlimited resources and thousands of servants who move quickly over land and ocean, to do his work, without pausing for rest. The poem ends by making a very significant point that even those, like Milton, who are unable to rush and run, also serve God, by accepting their lot and making the most of the situation and the raw material at their disposal. Interestingly, Milton did not know at that time that his greatest works would be written while he was blind.

The message conveyed by the sonnet is universal, and is of special significance to student-aspirants, struggling to live the higher life and serve the Masters, by serving humanity. A student-aspirant is someone who aspires to become a true disciple, and even a successful or "victorious" disciple like William Judge and Damodar Mavalankar. The physical body that bore the name of William Quan Judge died in 1896, on the 21st of March. But Judge, the true disciple, Judge, the labourer for the elevation of the Race, survives and lives in his writings, in the movement that he supported and fed with his life-force, and in the hearts of all those he has fired with his own devotion and aspiration. In the writings of Mr. Judge there is guidance for the aspirants and those devoted and sincere students who seek to serve humanity.

In his *Letters That Have Helped Me*, he has made clear the inner

meaning of the guru-chela relationship. A human being that is ready to come out from among those who live a sense-life, and is willing to be trained for effective service of humanity, is considered fit to be a disciple. By his own resolution and altruistic motive, the aspirant takes the first step in the direction of the Guru, and becomes a chela, called a "lay-chela." A lay chela receives no direct instruction from the Guru, and on the purity of life, on the power of virtue, depends the aid a lay-chela may receive. His progress depends upon his ability to meet any and every situation, and to turn to good the forces of evil.

If you want to know us, then know our philosophy; if you want to serve us then serve our humanity, said one of the Masters. Each aspirant is expected to labour, physically, intellectually and spiritually, to the best of his ability. A student-aspirant feels frustrated when, due to old age or physical or mental disability, he is unable to contribute to the work as much as he would wish to. The feeling comes, "I am doing nothing." But by being firm in mind and heart much help can be given on inner planes. Thus:

> Do not think you do nothing for the Cause which is so dear to you, for indeed the truest work is done on the inner planes, and without this there could be no work done on the outer planes. So, remember that you can work and are doing real work to help the cause by being strong in heart, in trust, and in devotion. In this way you help to keep the centre of the whole movement strong, and others, who can work on the outer plane, will be helped to do their work because the centre is strong, and they themselves get help from it. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 171)

When a lay chela becomes an accepted chela he comes in direct contact with his guru. It may happen that the chela cannot understand what the Guru teaches, as often happens in India, but the chela is satisfied to be near the Guru and fulfil his duty towards him. Then his abiding faith will eventually clear his mind, and for such disciples, one may say, "They also serve who only stand and wait." (*Ibid.*, p. 46)

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA
THE AWAKENING OF FAITH—I

[Adapted from the Lectures on the *Bhagavad-Gita*, delivered at One West Sixty Seventh Street, New York City, 1927-28.]

AS WE approach the end of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, we find that the ethical side of the philosophy is emphasized and stressed by the teacher, Krishna, to his pupil Arjuna. He is given the necessary fundamental and basic principles which alone can enable one to live the higher life. Having thus taught the metaphysical aspect of the science of life, Shri Krishna gives the practical application of those very same teachings. The Seventeenth Discourse of the *Gita* has a tremendous significance because of its bearing upon our everyday life and work.

In previous Discourses, Krishna gave us the general presentation of what evolution really means. In the Sixteenth Discourse Krishna described the two poles, we can say, of the ladder of evolution, the two extremes. On the one side, the state of darkness, those beings whom he called the *Asuras*, the "Brothers of the Shadow," the black magicians, and at the opposite pole, on the side of light and absolute knowledge are those other beings whom he called the *Suras*, or Divine Beings, known in Theosophy as the Great Masters of Wisdom and Compassion. In the Seventeenth Discourse Krishna takes up the intermediate stages between these two opposite classes of beings. He deals with persons like us, who are still struggling and are bound down in our life because of the qualities inherent in Nature. These three qualities or *gunas* are: *Sattva*, which is light, truth or goodness; *Rajas*, which is the quality of passion or of desire, and *Tamas*, the quality of laziness, indifference, ignorance and darkness. He distinguishes in those three classes of beings what he calls their *Shraddha*, or faith. He says that people can be known by knowing their particular *Shraddha*, and that faith is different for beings, belonging to one or the other of the three particular *gunas* in nature.

The Sanskrit term *Shraddha*, is very difficult to render in the English language. It has been translated as faith, and probably faith is the nearest

term we can find, but we must understand that the word faith does not convey the full meaning of the word *Shraddha* in Sanskrit, nor does it give quite the exact representation. *Shraddha* is faith, but not faith in the sense of belief, not blind acceptance of any particular theory, dogma, belief, in some people or classes of beings. *Shraddha* is, rather, the inner faith, the heart energy of the man, that principle in his make-up which enables him to continue to live, work and act during his particular life on earth. *Shraddha* is not just outward observance, it is not the creed or sect to which a person belongs, but rather something which lies within his own heart. It is a peculiarly predominant tendency which extends itself in all of his activities, whether mentally or morally.

A religious person, who attends church and professes to belong to a particular sect or religion, as well as a person who calls himself an atheist, all of them, whether they believe or do not believe, have this faith or heart energy which we call *Shraddha*. If we take for example a person, who attends church every Sunday and belongs to a particular religion, which he says, he accepts as the truth, the *Shraddha* of that person, from the spiritual point of view, is not an aggregate or assemblage of the theories which he is taught in his church, but it is the energy which moves that person from morning until night, while he is performing all the duties of his daily existence. If we think of a business man, who at the same time is a Church-goer, we call his creed or sect, the particular religion he observes, but his *Shraddha* will be the tendency, the predominant characteristic which is shown by that person in the business world. It is the characteristics and features which he shows in connection with the outside universe, in contacting other people, in making his business transactions. *Shraddha* is, however, different from the outside observances, from ceremony and rite. It is entirely an inner thing, and the best word perhaps to define *Shraddha* would be to say it is the inner faith, or heart energy.

That is the very first idea we must understand clearly, because the whole of this Discourse is based on the definition of *Shraddha*, and on the understanding that each person belonging to any of the three stages in the great ladder of evolution has his own particular and peculiar

inner faith. That is what is clearly indicated in this very Discourse by the question that Arjuna asks Krishna. At the end of the previous Discourse, Krishna definitely states that if a man is to decide and to choose on a firm basis, he must know the Scriptures, that is, he must consult the recorded philosophy and the universal laws, otherwise, he will follow simply the inclinations of his own desires. Arjuna immediately asks, "But what about the men who do not consult any particular written text, who do not go to the *shastras* for advice," and yet, he adds, "they worship in faith." This is sufficient indication that this faith and this worship to which Krishna and Arjuna are referring, are not the common ideas of faith and worship as understood in the western modern world. The answer that Krishna immediately gives, in verse 2, is also very clear. He says that the faith that is *Shraddha* is of three kinds, and is born from their own disposition. "It is of the quality of truth, *Sattva*, action *Rajas*, and indifference, *Tamas*, hear now what these are."

And in the following verse he defines for us what he understands by *Shraddha*. Re-translated to give the exact meaning of the Sanskrit original, the third verse reads as follows: "All are established according to their *Shraddha*, their heart Energy or faith, O son of Bharata, Man is faith-formed. What his faith is that verily is he."

This *Shraddha* then we cannot find in one of the constituents of man's constitution. It is not the result of the physical body alone, nor is it the astral body in itself, nor is it even the desire principle, the passion nature in man, nor is it his energy, his vitality or *prana*, nor even the incarnated ego in the body. It is rather the energy which results as the combination of all those factors. It is that tendency which has been built up in the previous existences by man's own actions, and which today is the result of his past. It is according to that inner faith or heart energy, that man must find himself, in the particular environment in which he is today. It is that faith which determines, to what particular race he will come to, to what nation he will belong, in what family he will take a body. It also determines all of his present karma, that is, the circumstances and opportunities that come to him in this particular incarnation. That

faith, then, is being constantly changed, affected and modified by the use of man's own free will today, in this incarnation. Theosophically speaking, we might define *Shraddha* as being the resulting forces and the combination, on the one hand, of the *skandhas* of man's nature, and on the other hand, of the faculties and capacities which inhere in that portion of the human soul which incarnates into the present body. We have in Theosophy a very good phrase to define inner faith or *Shraddha*, and that is *karmic stamina*. That gives us the idea.

Having thus defined what faith is, Krishna next takes up the question of worship, in verses 3, 4, 5 and 6. Krishna defines what the worship of various kinds of beings really is, in terms of their faith. Here it is interesting to stop for a moment and note the fact that we are going to see what the worship of the *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* beings is, and also we are given two phrases to describe the *asuric* or infernal beings, mentioned in the Sixteenth Discourse. Nothing, however, is said about the faith of those beings who have transcended completely the qualities of nature, those beings who are treading the higher spiritual path, or the path of chelaship, the path leading to the Masters of Wisdom. Their faith is omitted because it has already been given in that magnificent Eleventh Discourse, to which this seventeenth Discourse corresponds. The faith of those who have resolved to find and serve the Masters and the Divine Vision of the Universal Form was described in that Discourse. Further mention will be made of the *asuric* tendencies worshipped. It means *becoming worthy of relationship with* Them. It implies therefore, certain consubstantiality between the beings we are trying to worship, and the hierarchies or classes of beings outside of mankind who have within themselves the same tendencies or characteristics as those human beings. Unless there is in us something of the same nature as the Beings *we want to become worthy of relation with*, we cannot worship from the spiritual point of view, for in this worship, we are trying to contact these Beings outside of ourselves and to establish a relationship between them and ourselves.

(*To be continued*)

THE PROMISE OF FUTURE

OUR LIVES are propelled by our hopes and desires. At the beginning of every year we hope that the New Year will bring with it happiness, and that all our desires will be fulfilled. We are continually looking forward to something in our life. Having desires and trying to fulfil them is what keeps most of us going, it keeps us motivated.

How many of us truly hope and desire for the betterment of humanity? Most of our hopes and desires are selfish. Do we really think that this New Year, "May there be eradication of the suffering of the entire humanity, May there be peace in the world, May all people realise the truth and shun ignorance, May all humanity see the light of Truth?" With all negativity, despair, crime and suffering in today's world, one could easily conclude that we are spiralling out of control. With such tribulations, is there a promise for the future? At the year's end we habitually and cyclically turn our attention to what lies ahead. Theosophy teaches that the significant influences that recast conditions in the world begin with human attitudes, especially, those persistently maintained. So every year becomes a cyclic opportunity to make a new beginning.

The Roman Janus, the God of beginnings and endings, is pictured as having two opposing faces. Janus, the presiding deity over the month of January, watches the gate which opens the year. He is a double-faced god, the old face represents the past, and the young represents the future. With the key of garnered knowledge, he opens the New Year and with the staff he moves to higher altitudes. Similarly, we see that each human being is like Janus who is striving and progressing. The two faces represent our two natures—higher and lower, as also the past and the future, *i.e.*, it portrays the present as the invisible plane separating its two faces, the past and the future. In this sense, the past and the future are the temporal aspects of the spiritual reality, also known as the "Eternal Now."

"Time is only an illusion produced by the succession of our states of consciousness" (*S.D.*, I, 37). Hence, the enduring reality is the Consciousness itself. We tend to mistake illusion for reality and *vice*

versa. As mentioned in the *Gita*: "What is night to those who are unenlightened is as day to his gaze; what seems as day is known to him as night, the night of ignorance. Such is the self-governed Sage!"

This time of the year was celebrated by the ancients as the time of the birth of the Sun, or the return of the Sun in its northern course, beginning with 21st of December, the day of Winter Solstice. During this period, between Christmas and Easter, there is a rising wave of spiritual and psychic renewal, so that all that we desire to do has a greater impulsion than at some other time of the year. This is the time when the astral life of the earth is "young" and strong.

It is January the 4th that the Theosophists select as their New Year, since the 4th of January is sacred to Mercury-Budha or Thoth-Hermes as also to Osiris. It was the day on which the *Kumaras* or *Manasputras* lighted up *Manas*, making man a thinking being. January 3 is sacred to Minerva-Athene, the goddess of Wisdom, and also to Isis, "she who generates life." Hence, we can reflect on this cycle and take advantage of the power of renewal that it brings. And we can make higher resolutions, which are made with free will, which are altruistic and for the betterment of humanity.

Aphorism 8 on Karma, given by Mr. Judge, states that the action of Karma "may be known by calculation from cause to effect; and this calculation is possible because the effect is wrapped up in and is not succedent to the cause." Just as the karmic effect is inherent in the cause itself, so also, in the cyclic manifestation of the universe we have the seeds of the future events inherent in the moment of the birth of the universe. The next moment, future, is inherent in the present moment. It helps to remember that cycles move out from the psychic energies generated by the human thought. Since mind is the true plane of action we are never really victims of pure chance. The human thought initiates cycles and the human beings experience cycles. There are individual cycles, and cycles which encompass the entire human family. But we only see the effects that give evidence of un-exhausted causes. Man, the thinking being, initiates the cycles and also evolves in and through them. Therefore, we can see that the cycles may be characterised by the nature of the souls

destined to evolve through them.

Every New Year, man, the Janus-like being, is reminded that the fight is still going on between the higher and the lower natures. The old face which looks from the region of past memories, and the new which peeps from the region of hope still has hold over us. We begin the New Year with a hope, looking forward to pleasure and happiness. These hopes are likely to be frustrated. Hopes, fears, memories and anticipations keep the human consciousness in a non-integrated state. The most prominent aspect of life which you can believe with certainty is uncertainty, we cannot predict the future. Most of us seem to reject uncertainty. We make plans, so that we have plans for the year, plans for the week and plans for the day. Most of us even buy New Year planners and diaries and fill it up with plans for the upcoming year. Our whole life is planned out. Since life is uncertain, and everything is in a state of constant flux, it is good to remember, as Mr. Judge says, "An occultist is never fixed on any particular mortal plan," and that one must learn to take up "an easy and fluidic position." (*Letter That Have Helped Me*, p. 124)

But we are not able to accept uncertainty. We are used to creating fixed plans. Since we have plans and things to do, so we think nature has to comply with our plans. We try to control uncertainty. When all our plans do not materialise, when things do not go the way they should then we get angry, frustrated and disappointed. A little observation shows that many of our expectations are completely unrealistic and based on selfish desires. We fail to realize that we continue to suffer because we keep asking for things from our partners, our colleagues, including our own selves. We have great expectations from ourselves. Often we ask from ourselves things, which we will never be able to achieve. Similarly, we have great expectations from the future. And then we suffer when we do not get what we want. Thus, the issue is not with the world but with our expectations from people and from life. The sooner we accept that life is uncertain, the better it will be for us. Instead of ignoring the uncertainty of life, or being afraid of it, we can learn to embrace it. And then we will not have any expectations from life, from our family, friends,

colleagues and partners. Then, we are less likely to get shocked or surprised, but instead are prepared, for whatever life brings to us. Instead of getting angry or upset about the situation and denying it, we can make the best use of the situation to understand and learn the meaning of life, the lesson that life is trying to teach us.

But embracing uncertainty does not mean that we need to be irresponsible, indifferent, apathetic or de-motivated in life. On the contrary, we need to perform our duties, moment to moment, cheerfully and carefully. We need to be responsible for our thoughts, speech and actions. As we are always hoping, expecting, desiring and running after things in life, we are always restless and anxious. We need to act from a higher perspective. The attitude that we need to cultivate is one of equanimity, as described in the *Gita*. Shri Krishna says: "He, O son of Pandu, who doth not hate these qualities—illumination, action, and delusion—when they appear, nor longeth for them when they disappear; who, like one who is of no party, sitteth as one unconcerned about the three qualities and undisturbed by them, who being persuaded that the qualities exist, is moved not by them; who is of equal mind in pain and pleasure, self-centred, to whom a lump of earth, a stone, or gold are as one; who is of equal mind, with those who love or dislike, constant, the same whether blamed or praised; equally minded in honour and disgrace, and the same toward friendly or unfriendly side, engaging only in necessary actions, such a one hath surmounted the qualities."

Shri Krishna says, "My devotee who is un-expecting, pure, just, impartial, devoid of fear and who hath forsaken interest in the results of actions, is dear unto me." When one is able to renounce the doership as well as the fruits of actions, and is constantly aware of the divine presence within, then to him Krishna promises, "I presently become the Saviour from the ocean of incarnations and death." It is important to cultivate such an attitude in life, rather than having endless desires and expectations, and being deluded in this ever-changing, transitory world.

No doubt, we need to have a direction, aim and purpose in life, and work towards the same, but at the same time, let us not lose

sight of the fact that the so-called "future" is the outcome of our present. Hence we need to focus on the present while doing our duty, being unattached to the results of our actions. The most important thing which we need to realise is that the whole world exists and is sustained by the ONE, which is unchangeable and eternal, and that is our only true reality. Why are we running after the illusion of the promise of the future when we are that "One" itself in reality? We are That, and therefore, we have all the knowledge and all the powers—powers of creation, preservation, destruction and regeneration. We are the creators of our own future destinies by our own choices, thoughts and actions, each moment of our life. This attitude and approach to life will automatically take care of our future.

We all make resolutions at the time of the New Year, but most of the time, we fail to keep the same. "The reason for our failures is that we do not understand our own natures. Our first mistake is to make *negative* resolutions. We say, I will *not* drink; I will *not* lie; I will *not* do this; I will *not* do that. Whereas the proper resolve to make is that—I *will* do this, the opposite of what we are now doing. In this case, we make a direct affirmation of the will, while the other form of resolution puts us in a purely negative position," explains Mr. Crosbie (*The Friendly Philosopher*, pp. 310-11). We forget the need to persist and to sustain the resolution. It is not enough to merely desire, but to act on what one has resolved to do. Also, when the desire is intense, "will" comes into action.

At the beginning of a new year we should throw a lion's glance at the year that just passed. Writes a Master of Wisdom: "It is the custom among some people to glance back at their life's path from the hillocks of time they annually surmount."

Hence every moment of life, every new day, and a new year, is an opportunity to examine our thoughts, feelings, actions and also reactions and responses to the past, from which emerges the prospective vision of the future. And thus, every moment of our life becomes a cyclic opportunity to make a new beginning, and to steer our life in a particular direction, in the future, in harmony with ALL.

WAR AND PEACE

THE TERM war has many connotations. In philosophical discourse it is a metaphor for emanation and adjustment at the beginning of cosmic evolution of nascent pre-cosmic forces, and for the "struggle" between celestial bodies before orderly progression and harmonious revolution of the spheres are established in the sidereal system in accordance with cosmic laws. This is allegorized in ancient cosmology as "war in heaven." Struggle which is inevitable in human life between the material pole of man, personified as the powers of darkness, and the spiritual pole of his being, represented by the powers of light—between spirit and matter, in short—is allegorized as "war on earth." The "earthly war" is shadowing forth in the human tabernacle of the abstract allegorical "war in heaven" on the metaphysical plane—cosmic facts and human events being interrelated in the complex cosmic and anthropic evolutionary scheme. The allegories in the world myths, symbolizing the cosmic and human events, have many meanings and applications.

> All these relate to Heaven and Earth, and have a double and often even a triple meaning, and esoteric application to things above as to things below. They relate severally to astronomical, theogonical and human struggles; to the adjustment of orbs, and the supremacy among nations and tribes. (*S.D.*, I, 202)

The subject being too vast and abstruse, for a cogent exposition in a short article, the cosmical, theogonical and astronomical aspects of the allegory is not touched upon. The subject of war and peace is, therefore, considered from the standpoint of spiritual psychology, in order to understand the deep mystery of human nature, in which the incessant play of the duality of opposite natures has sway.

War, in the common parlance, is conflict of interests between individuals, communities and nations, striving for supremacy over one another. Ambition to rise above one's peers in eminence and accomplishments or for dominion, fanaticism of religious views and dogmas pitted against liberal spirit, pursuit of commercial interests

and political power, are all commonplace instances of it. History is replete with records of such conflicts. Sociologists say that the politics of power-seeking is the womb of war. Historians define war as organized armed conflict in which two or more nations or groups mutually engage for various reasons and motives, entailing much death and destruction on all sides. They define peace as the period between two wars. War has been with mankind ever since man appeared on earth as a thinking being in the distant past.

From ancient times, war as an art, has been a part of the culture of every people. Strategic doctrines, weaponry, training, art of combat, motivation, intelligence gathering, leadership, logistics, tactics of deployment and maneuvering troops to outwit the enemy, timing of offence, defense, retreat, coordination of aerial, marine and ground forces in combat, etc., have been developed to perfection as military science. Ancient Chinese military treatise of the 5th century B.C., formulated by the military genius named Sun Tsu, is still popular, whose basic principles are followed to this day, not only by China, with adaptations and modifications to suit the technological advancement that has taken place since, but are adapted and used by the powerful international commercial interests in business competition and in waging trade wars as well. In the religious history of the ancient peoples is seen that some of the great characters who came down, in small and great cycles, to teach and help on higher evolution of man, were also past masters in military science and art of war.

War entails much death and destruction, sorrow and suffering of thousands of people. The twentieth century has gone down in history as the bloodiest ever. In the First World War, which lasted for four years, it is recorded that twenty million people perished and an equal number wounded. The Second World War, which soon followed, was even more devastating, in which fifty to eighty million people perished, many cities were razed to the ground and national economies ruined. In the article, *Karmic Visions,* H.P.B. portrays in vivid colors the terrible suffering and destruction wars cause. The son of a Prince, the main character of the narrative, sees in a vision, rising before his mind's eye, as his weakened body lies prostrate in his sick bed, the heart-rending

sorrow and misery he had caused by the wars he had waged, afflicting millions of innocent men, women and children. Thus:

> Every pang in his own wasting body brings to him in dream the recollection of pangs still worse, of pangs suffered through and for him. He sees and *feels* the torture of the fallen millions, who die after long hours of terrible mental and physical agony; who expire in forest and plain, in stagnant ditches by the road-side, in pools of blood under a sky made black with smoke..... He sees the old mothers who have lost the light of their souls: families, the hand that fed them. He beholds widowed young wives thrown on the wide, cold world, and beggared orphans wailing in the streets by the thousands. He finds the young daughters of his bravest old soldiers exchanging their mourning garments for the gaudy frippery of prostitution, and the Soul-Ego shudders in the sleeping Form. (*H.P.B. Series No. 6*, p. 38)

The Ego-soul shudders with painful regrets that he had been the cause of infliction of pain and misery on the populace on such a colossal scale. Knowing well through historical experience, the destructiveness of wars, why do nations yet engage in wars is a mystery for which there are no answers with modern thinkers. Tolstoy, in his monumental work *War and Peace*, emphasizes the irrational motives for human behaviour in war as well as in peace. He wonders how mysterious are our individual actions even to ourselves, and concludes that motives which propel our actions are deeper than human reasoning. Historical events, according to him, are shaped not so much by influence of great men, who now and then appear in the affairs of the world, but are the result of millions of individual chains of cause and effect, too small to be analyzed independently, and yet, in the sum, determining the course of events.

Contesting the pessimistic views of the believers in the inevitability of wars as a natural outcome of the law of "struggle for existence" which reigns in nature, H.P.B. points out that it applies only to the physical, and not to the moral plane of being, and that man is essentially a moral being. She says, "These elements of discord

pertain to the physical man and are the result of unequal development under the law of evolution" (*H.P.B. Series No. 34*, p. 31). Theosophy teaches that the combative animal nature of man will gradually yield to higher reason, and dictates of justice and compassion, as human consciousness evolves more and more, in the course of universal evolution, to an apprehension of the reality of the soul-solidarity of spiritual humanity. In other words, as higher *Manas*, the divine Individuality, becomes more active and developed in the race, *Kama*—desires and passions—in man will be subdued, spiritualized and harnessed for nobler ends of common good and higher progress. That is the noble destiny of man.

Great Sages of ancient India were practical idealists. They upheld, exemplified and inculcated non-violence, established *Dharma* as the unvarying principle of thought and action in all aspects of social life and statecraft, and enlightenment and emancipation of souls as the supreme ideal of life. Yet, they recognized the inevitability of conflict in human affairs at the present stage of human evolution, when the *Kamic* principle in human nature has not yet come under the complete control of *Manasic* principle, which is only partially developed in him. Therefore, they laid down ethical principles in war so as to reduce death and destruction to an absolute minimum. These noble ethical principles of war were faithfully followed by the rulers in ancient India.

In an article entitled *Kshatriya Chivalry*, contributed by Dewan Bahdur K.S. Ramaswamy Sastri to the *Aryan Path* of October 1938, the author recalls noble features of ancient warfare in the concept of *Dharma Yudh* (righteous war). He shows that *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Sukraniti*, *Ordinances of Manu*, *Thirukkural* and other works contain elaborate rules which forbid attacking one who is in fear and stands with folded arms or runs away from the battle field, or an eunuch; one without armour or a mere onlooker, or who is eating food or drinking water. It was forbidden to hurt women, children and old people; when two warriors were fighting each other, a third should not interfere. The rules of warfare ordained that prisoners of war should be courteously treated, that wounded foes must be treated by surgeons, if

a maiden is taken as a prisoner she should be treated with honour and helped to go back to her country. *Thirukkural* teaches that though the learned say that the fierceness of fighting is noble and admirable, it is more noble and admirable to become the benefactor of the enemy when he is injured or conquered. The author says in his concluding remarks:

> It is thus clear that ancient India, besides her achievements in literature and art, philosophy and religion, introduced noble elements of righteousness even into the pugnacities and hatreds of men. She not only held aloft the banner of *ahimsa* but also controlled and regulated *himsa* in such a manner that the war was robbed of half its terrors and all its coarseness, and stands as a guide and model to the vainglorious modern world.

After the two devastating world wars the United Nations Organization evolved a body of international law, called "International humanitarian law," to minimize the damage and destruction during war to civilian populations, and so on, to which almost all nations have been signatories. But, unfortunately, the experience of wars fought by nations, after the great war, shows that they are observed by fighting nations more in breaching of its provisions than in conforming to them.

The seeds of war are sown by man in his own heart and mind by himself when he, in his ignorance, incessantly struggling against his own conscience and good sense, impulsively follows the dictates of selfish desires and passions. The two antagonistic forces wage war with one another on the plane of the human body. The outer struggles and wars on the stage of the world is the reflex of the moral dilemma and struggle that man is impelled to fight within himself. In the powerful narrative, *Karmic Visions*, the chief character suffers from the unspeakable pang of conscience when the terrible spectre of bloody wars he had waged for his own glory rises before him in vivid vision, and he vows in the presence of divine conscience, repeating the vow he had taken in past lives, but the memory of which had not been registered in the brain of his suffering personality, thus:

> Never, oh, never shall I, henceforth, sacrifice for vainglorious fame or ambition a single son of my

> motherland! Our world is so full of unavoidable misery, so poor with joys and bliss, and shall I add to its cup of bitterness the fathomless ocean of woe and blood, called war? Avaunt, such thought!...Oh, never more.... (*H.P.B. Series No. 6*, p. 42)

Under the benign influence of his divine Ego to make him remember his old pledge and act in conformity, he swears never again to wage war, and then he wakes from his divine dream to see around him marshalled columns of troops armed with deadly weapons ready to obey the royal call for another war. Shall he remember and keep his pledge and work for peace, or succumb to the powerful instinct of war-mongering he has brought forward from the past?

Such is the moral struggle that rages in the human soul. The divine Ego, the Real Man, is the pillar of peace shining with light of wisdom, but its earthly shadow, following the impulses of past tendencies, scarcely hears the voice of conscience, which becomes lost in the clamour and demands of moving passions, chained as he is by the effects of his past actions. This is the real war which is raging in the human heart. But peace must prevail at last, as man is born with "divine destiny."

> This war will last till the inner and divine man adjusts his outer terrestrial self to his own spiritual nature. Till then the dark and fierce passions of the former will be at eternal feud with his master, the Divine man. But the *animal* will be tamed one day, because its nature will be changed, and harmony will reign once more between the two as before the "Fall," when even mortal man was *created* by the Elements and was not born. (*S.D.*, II, 268)

PERSONS of high self-esteem are not driven to make themselves superior to others; they do not seek to prove their value by measuring themselves against a comparative standard. Their joy is being who they are, not being better than someone else.

—NATHANIEL BRANDEN

SAINT JNANESHWAR: LIFE AND TEACHINGS

IV

Changdev Pasashti consists of the sixty five verses written by Saint Jnaneshwar on the blank paper sent to him by Changdev. It is regarded as a *letter* written by Jnaneshwar to the worthy disciple, Changdev, explaining to him the nature of Reality and the path to self-realization. All ordinary letters containing worldly matters tend to get stale with the passage of time, but even after nearly 800 years this letter written by Jnaneshwar remains fresh and continues to provide guidance to a true aspirant walking the path of self-realization, writes Swami Nityabodhanandtirth. Commenting on the very first verse of this work, he points out that Changdev was no ordinary disciple, he was pure, and had developed fourteen aspects of his nature, like the fourteen phases of the moon. To fully bloom and shine like a full moon, he only needed to acquire *atma-jnana* or Self-Knowledge. In the first verse Jnaneshwar teaches the nature of Reality. So long as One Reality or *Parabrahmam* remains hidden, an ignorant person sees only this illusory world, and he takes this illusion to be reality. For a self-realized person this illusion is destroyed, and the Reality is revealed, and he is able to appreciate that the One Supreme Consciousness pervades everything and is everywhere. However, when Reality or the Divine essence is revealed, *illusion is destroyed, but not the world itself.* "As a child does not know the gold hidden in the ornaments, so this knowledge (arising from *rajas*), does not perceive unity behind the names and forms," (*Jnaneshwari*, XVIII.542). "I am both what is manifest and what is unmanifest; therefore, O Arjuna, is there any place where I am not? It is indeed a pity that creatures are unlucky and fail to see me." (*Jnaneshwari*, IX.300)

In the preface to his translation of *Jnaneshwari*, Shri M. R. Yardi points out that Shri Jnaneshwar and Shri Shankaracharya were both non-dualists. But even though Shri Shankara's doctrine of *Brahman* as the reality (*Brhama satyam*) was acceptable to Shri Jnaneshwar, it is doubtful whether he accepted Shankaracharya's doctrine of the unreality of the world (*Jagat mithya*). Jnaneshwar holds that even if

the world is real, the world appearance is not real. Just as one has the false notion of serpent in a necklace or a silver in the shell, so is this world appearance, and it comes in the way of true knowledge.

Probably, the difference between the two views, concerning the relation between the world and the Reality, is only apparent. When Shankaracharya says, the world is unreal, the implication seems to be that the world is *relatively* real. In comparison with *Brahman*, the world is unreal. By unreal is meant illusory, very much like a dream, which has its own subjective reality but which is illusory compared to the waking state. Shankaracharya describes Maya as illusion-producing ignorance. The illusion of the snake in a rope is due to our ignorance of what really is there behind the appearance, *i.e.*, ignorance of the substratum or the ground (*adhisthana*), in this case, the rope.

H.P.B. explains that the One Reality is the Causeless Cause of all Causes, which is the noumenon hidden behind the phenomena. All that exists in the world is only relatively real. How much of the reality hidden behind the phenomena one is able to perceive will depend upon one's power of cognition. Thus, "Maya or illusion is an element which enters into all finite things, for everything that exists has only a relative, not an absolute reality, since the appearance which the hidden noumenon assumes for an observer depends upon his power of cognition." For instance, a savage sees in a painting nothing more than streaks and daubs of colour, but an educated person sees a landscape or a face. For the perception of ordinary people the world, and all things in it is real. In fact, "whatever plane our consciousness may be acting in, both we and the things belonging to that plane are, for the time being, our only realities." But as we rise in the scale of development, from stage to stage, we go on discarding the relative "realities." Only when "we shall have reached the absolute Consciousness, and blended our own consciousness with it, shall we be free from the delusions produced by Maya," explains H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 39-40)

The eighth verse of *Changdev Pasashti* explains the difference between an ignorant person and *Atma-jnani* or a self-realized person. When the perceiver and the object of perception are seen to be

different, then that is ignorance. A self-realized person sees no difference between the perceiver and the object perceived. An ignorant person sees the world (the object of perception), as different from the Perceiver, the God within or *Atman*. We see our face in the mirror. An ignorant person feels that there are two faces, his physical face, and the face reflected in the mirror. But in reality, there is only one face, because though we feel that the face in the mirror is real, it is not. A self-realized person who has realized that he is not his body, mind, feelings, but is THAT, the *Atman*, sees that *Atman* everywhere in the universe. In the Ninth Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says, "All this world is pervaded by Me in My unmanifested form; all beings exist in Me, but I do not exist in them (verse 4)." In *Jnaneshwari* this verse is explained thus: "Just as when the milk coagulates, it becomes curds, or the seed is transformed into the tree, or the gold into ornaments, so this whole universe is nothing but my expanse." Just as foam appears on water, but there is no water in the foam, just like we do not see manifold objects of the dream after waking up, so also, though everything exists in the Reality, that One Reality does not exist in them, *i.e.*, the One Reality, in its unmanifest nature, is the substratum for all the manifested names and forms, but that Reality does not share in their joys and sorrows, or their births and deaths.

Verse 31 of *Changdev Pasashti* points out that our eyes can see every visible thing in the world, but these eyes are incapable of seeing themselves. So also, *Atma-jnani* or a self-realized person cannot see himself, his true Self which is *Atman*. That is because it would be like *Atman* wanting to see Itself. The Self or *Atman*, being the Perceiver, cannot perceive Itself. If we want to see our own eyes, then we have to use a mirror, as *upadhi* or instrument, so that light from our eyes falls on the mirror and then gets reflected back to the eyes, showing us our own eyes. So also, to perceive the perceiver, we have to keep before us the "mirror" of the world. In the Fifteenth Chapter of *Jnaneshwari* (verse 4) Jnaneshwar tells us to refrain from duality. Just as the sun's reflection returns to the original disc when the water in which it was reflected dries up. In the same way we

require some *upadhi* to perceive the *Atman*, God or One Reality.

H.P.B. explains this by an example. The atoms of gold scattered throughout the substance of auriferous quartz may be imperceptible to the naked eye of the miner. But whereas the miner knows what gold will look like when extracted from quartz, we at our level cannot form any conception of the reality of things as separated from the veil of *Maya* which hides them, *i.e.*, we are able to grasp only Its manifested aspect. (*S.D.*, I, 45)

We cannot perceive God like we perceive everything else, because It is Itself the Knower, and the knower cannot be the object of its own knowledge. For instance, the finger cannot catch hold of itself or the fire cannot burn itself. "It is wisdom itself, the object of wisdom, and that which is to be obtained by wisdom," (*Gita*, XIII). To know It, is to become It, and that is the *Samadhi* stage. In *Samadhi*, "the ascetic loses consciousness of every individuality, including his own. He becomes—the ALL." The perceiver, the perception and the object of perception, all become one.

Further, in verse 64 of *Changdev Pasashti* we are told that not only are we not able to perceive God or *Atman*, but also, It is beyond description. We can only describe it in the negatives, *Neti, Neti*. It is not like this, or not like that. To assign to it any attributes is to dwarf it.

Commenting on verse 58 of *Changdev Pasashti*, Swami Nityabodhanandtirth writes that it is interesting to know what kind of conversation takes place between Jnaneshwar and Chang Dev, as the former passes on the teachings. This conversation is without words, through silence, as mentioned in *Jnaneshwari* (I.58): "One should tell the *Gita* without words, enjoy it without the knowledge of senses, and grasp its doctrine before it is spoken." We are reminded of *Dakshinamurti Stotra*: "There sits the Guru Deva, a youth, and the disciples are elders; the teaching is silence, and still the disciples' doubts are dispelled." In verse 65 of *Changdev Pasashti* we are told that while passing on the teachings to Chang Dev, Jnaneshwar himself was in a state of consciousness, called *Turya*, the highest state of *Samadhi*.

Jnaneshwar is also the author of the *Haripath abhangas*

(unbreakable devotional poems). The *Haripath* was composed as a collection of verses to be sung for the praise, worship and study of the divine principle. He praises devotion as the most essential quality in spiritual life. "Oh, how quickly the deity is pleased. Remain quiet, in solitude, do not strive needlessly. With great effort you pursue your worldly life, but why are you not worshipping Hari? He says chanting God's name will break the world's hold on you."

Savitribai Khanolkar observes that Jnaneshwar's description of the oneness of devotees with God could not be clearer: "*When one mirror reflects another, which reflects which*?" In Advaita, he says, there is still *Bhakti* and he adds: "It is a matter of experience and not of words. *The love of the devotee can be compared with the aggregate of all terrestrial loves*. For there is actually no comparison to the highest feeling the human mind is capable of. God is a sequel, yet the force which propels the heart towards Him is even stronger than that of a lover for his beloved. Could one say it is like the urge of embracing one's mother and lover at one and the same time? In God, a devotee finds final and complete fulfilment of thousands of previous lives' yearnings for such a moment....Fear and anxiety take to their heels and peace infinite abides."

Pasayadan, translated as, "The Gift of Divine Grace" are the nine verses, which appear almost at the end of *Jnaneshwari*. It is a prayer to the Supreme Self or God, in which Jnaneshwar makes supplication that if the Supreme Self is pleased with his sacrifice in the form of this literary work (*Jnaneshwari*) then He should grant him the grace and fulfil his grand dream of peace and bliss of humanity. Humanity can be blissful only if the wicked drop their evil ways. Therefore, Jnaneshwar prays to God and says, "May the wicked drop their evil ways and become inclined towards good deeds, and may all beings develop friendship for one another." Lastly, he wishes, "Let all the three worlds be perfectly happy...and may those who follow the teachings of this work have perfect happiness in this and the next world."

(*Concluded*)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Atheists, it seems, are one of the world's most persecuted minorities, and they are fighting an uphill battle. Though following a religion and belief in a supreme being is a personal choice, there is a widespread hatred and punishment for a non-conformist. In thirteen countries around the globe, namely, Afghanistan, Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, atheism or disbelief in God is punishable by death, as per the law. In the recent past, a certain individual in Pakistan was lynched by a mob on accusations of blaspheme. As a safety measure, the atheists spread across the world have formed an online community, called "Atheist Republic." It was founded by an ex-Muslim and author from Iran, in his effort to connect with other atheists in his country. To his surprise he discovered that there were many atheists also outside of Iran. Today, "Atheists Republic" is one of the largest online communities of atheists in the world, with more than 1.7 million people on its social media handle, and almost eighty thousand people in its Facebook group. It has a one-to-one support group, where people are provided with resources and emotional assistance in the time of need. It also has a large number of consulates in many cities.

In the recent past, when members of a Malaysian Consulate of Atheist Republic, posted a picture of their meeting online, it created an uproar in the country. A minister of the government said that the atheists should be "hunted down." The Atheists Republic then comes to the rescue in such cases.

There are different factors responsible for triggering atheism. Bhagat Singh, an Indian Revolutionary, goes in depth on his disbelief in God, and writes, "I totally reject the existence of an omnipresent, all powerful, all knowing God." Many Indian atheists have taken his words to heart. These non-believers see religion as a belief that is unsubstantiated and unscientific in nature. For many others, the belief in atheism is the result of seeing how religion has adversely affected the life of people, creating a divide between individuals and communities. It is true that many ills

of society like caste discrimination and terrorism have roots in some kind of religious ideology.

It is not true that atheism has come to the fore only in recent times, and that it is a modern trend that will go away. "My disbelief has nothing to do with fashion or trend; I consider the arguments in favour of god as weak and lacking in substance. Atheism is the only logical choice in such a case," says a young atheist. Despite persecutions faced by non-religious in many countries, many surveys and studies have indicated that the world is becoming less religious year by year, writes Mridul Negi. (*Weekend, The Free Press Journal*, February 4, 2018)

Someone has said, "I believe in God because he gives me freedom to deny him." Humanity has always been divided into two camps: believers and nonbelievers. We can do without a personal God, projected by religions, an almighty personage, who like a kind father forgives or rewards, and like a powerful and benevolent monarch must be obeyed and prayed to, in order to get concessions and pardon. A bigot is an obstinate and intolerant believer in a religion. H.P.B. says, "We prefer immeasurably more in our Society Agnostics, and even rank Atheists, to bigots of whatever religion. An Agnostic's mind is ever opened to the truth; whereas the latter [truth] blinds the bigot like the sun does an owl. The best—*i.e.*, the most truth-loving, philanthropic, and honest—of our Fellows were, and are, Agnostics and Atheists (disbelievers in a *personal* God)," (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 267).

But as Voltaire said, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him." Theosophy teaches the same. "*Human nature is like universal nature in its abhorrence of a vacuum.* It feels an intuitional yearning for a Supreme Power. Without a God, the cosmos would seem to it but like soulless corpse," (*Isis*, I, 36). "An *extra*-cosmic god is fatal to philosophy, an *intra*-cosmic Deity…is a philosophical necessity." (*S.D.*, II, 41)

Belief in God's existence rests mainly on the anthropic principle, while non-belief rests on unaccountability of so much pain and wickedness. Why does God—if He exists—allow earthquakes, floods

and typhoons to occur, bringing death and destruction in their wake? The theists counter this with the free-will argument. The anthropic principle seems to emphasize the existence of intelligence behind the orderliness of the universe. God is Law. God is all-pervasive and so is Law. In fact, in the manifested Universe the presence of God is felt through the Law, which works impartially and unerringly. It is this law which makes the universe orderly and gives it meaning.

Maurice Pappworth was a doctor who revealed in his 1967 explosive book, *Human Guinea Pigs*, how unsuspecting patients were being "subject to mental and physical distress which is in no way necessitated by, and has no connection with, the treatment of their disease." According to one reviewer of the book, they, *i.e.*, those in hospitals, prisons, orphanages and psychiatric centres, were being sacrificed to science by "wolves in white coats." The book created headlines around the world. His book mentioned names, accusing dozens of doctors of abusing their positions to carry out risky and sometimes lethal experiments. He delved into medical journals and discovered that abuses were happening on a shocking scale, involving thousands of victims.

He catalogued more than 200 examples of abusive research published in United Kingdom and United States of America. In most of these cases no consent was taken of the patients, and it did not appear that they were fulfilling the Hippocratic Oath, to "do no harm." For instance, "Doctors injected unsuspecting people with malaria parasites, meningitis bacteria, live polio virus and live cancer cells. More than 40 people with diabetes, including children, had their insulin withheld so that they became comatose, after which samples of their liver and kidney were taken for analysis....In one study, doctors reported boring holes into the skulls of 18 people who were in hospital for conditions unrelated to the research. They then inserted tubes to measure the effect on the brain of squeezing the veins in the subjects' necks, had them breathe carbon dioxide, subjected them to painful stimuli and injected acid into their bodies." Pappworth knew that he was revealing only the

tip of the iceberg, and that "the worst experiments go unrecorded." His work stirred up debate on both sides of the Atlantic so that ultimately, research hospitals in the UK and elsewhere set up ethics committees to oversee their work.

Unfortunately, research that would be prohibited in the West would spring up in poorer nations, such as India and Africa. The medical establishment continued to bear grudge against him, and it was only in 1993, that he was made a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, which was 57 years after he had qualified for it. He passed away in the year 1994, and was called a "pestilential nuisance" in his obituary. It was meant as a compliment. In the recent past his late daughter Joanna Seldon has written a biography, entitled, *The Whistle-Blower*, writes Fred Pearce. (*New Scientist*, February 10, 2018)

The problem of erosion of ethics is not a new one, but what causes concern is the unprecedented increase in unethical practices in our day. The cancer of immorality has spread to almost all fields—business, sports, social, political, educational and even scientific—and is far more complex now than it was in days of old. Some of the ethical issues are intricate and tricky and this makes it difficult to decide if an individual or group of individuals have overstepped the boundaries of morality. There are divided opinions regarding many scientific investigations, such as stem-cell research, cloning, genetically engineered crops, etc. Do ends justify means?

A few years ago it was being debated, whether the study of ethics must be included in the medical curriculum. Mere utterance of Hippocratic Oath will not solve the problem. As Dr. C. Gopalan, President of the Indian Council of Medical Research, once remarked, doctors in a sense gained the world but were in danger of losing their soul. The need of the hour is recapturing the lost philosophical foundation of medicine. The future of medicine may well depend upon the training of physicians who will once more be humanists.

Disappointment is inevitable; it is how we deal with it that sets the blueprint for the rest of your life. Often there is a feeling that life

has dealt us a more unfair deal than to others. "Though some do get more than their share of disappointments I believe that we have the inner strength to deal with whatever life doles out. It is not the amount of grief or disappointment that comes one's way but the manner of dealing with it that shapes a person's character. Those who can take the good and bad, success and failure, victory and disappointment with the same equanimity are the ones who pass the test of life," writes Vinita Nangia. Disappointments are inevitable because not all our dreams are likely to be fulfilled; people may not act as per our expectations, and likewise, life situations may turn out to be far from what we expected them to be. If we allow our disappointments to get the better of us, they lead to sadness, grumpiness, disillusionment, discouragement or helpless anger. Often, the caustic, anti-social people we come across, those whom we label "frustrated souls," have been repeatedly disappointed in life.

The first step towards dealing with disappointments with maturity is to set realistic expectations, but at the same time also keep room for disappointment. If our plans are thwarted, we must allow ourselves some time for disappointment, always remembering that soon we will have to snap out of it. We may use the time to assess the situation, find out the cause of failure and even try to see a silver lining and the make the most of the situation. We may find that all doors are firmly closed and that means life expects us to look towards something else. "While you have life and health and a positive outlook, you can always move on towards other, different victories," writes Vinita Dawra Nangia. (*Times Life*, *Sunday Times of India*, February 4, 2018)

There are these *mantramic* words from Mr. Judge that there is "the ebb and flow of life that washes to our feet and away again many things that are not easy to lose nor pleasant to welcome, yet they all belong to Life, to the Self." When we are fixed on a particular outcome, or wish things to happen as per our expectations, then in a subtle way we assert our personal will against the divine will, and then disappointment is bound to result. "The way of inward peace is in all things to conform to the pleasure and disposition of the Divine Will. Such as would have all things succeed and come to

pass according to their own fancy, are not come to know this way; and therefore lead a harsh and bitter life; always restless and out of humour, without treading the way of peace," writes Mr. Judge (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 36*, p. 1). There is a huge disappointment when there is a loss of a loved one. To someone who was unable to reconcile to the death of his son, Mr. Judge wrote, "It is hard to part with those we love, but death is only a parting on the lower planes; it is not a 'loss' on the higher. But the true union on the inner planes, which always exists though we may be unconscious of it, cannot be consciously felt so long as there is any feeling of 'disappointment.'" (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 170). Just as feeling of disappointment prevents us from experiencing the inner bond with our dear-departed one, so also, extreme disappointment temporarily dissociates us from our Divine nature and we cease to receive help and guidance from the divine within. Says *Light on the Path*, "If grief, dismay, disappointment or pleasure can shake the soul so that it loses its fixed hold on the calm spirit which inspires it, and the moisture of the life breaks forth, drowning knowledge in sensation, then all is blurred, the windows are darkened, the light is useless."

Disappointments, adversities, pain, etc. must be looked upon as the opportunities to learn the lessons of life because life is a school, and it is all made up of learning. The very fact that we were disappointed shows that we were attached to that thing, person, or outcome. When we have cultivated sufficient detachment, either we will not feel disappointed, or even if we do, we will get over it quickly and move on. "There is one thing that should be remembered in the midst of all difficulties; it is this—'When the lesson is learned the necessity ceases.'" (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 10)

THERE are at least two kinds of cowards. One kind always lives with himself, afraid to face the world. The other kind lives with the world, afraid to face himself.

—ROSCOE SNOWDEN

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THE SECRET DOCTRINE. A facsimile of the original edition of 1888.
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The United Lodge of Theosophists

DECLARATION

THE policy of this Lodge is independent devotion to the cause of Theosophy, without professing attachment to any Theosophical organization. It is loyal to the great Founders of the Theosophical Movement, but does not concern itself with dissensions or differences of individual opinion.

The work it has on hand and the end it keeps in view are too absorbing and too lofty to leave it the time or inclination to take part in side issues. That work and that end is the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Philosophy of Theosophy, and the exemplification in practice of those principles, through a truer realization of the SELF, a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood.

It holds that the unassailable *Basis for Union* among Theosophists, wherever and however situated, is "*similarity of aim, purpose and teaching*," and therefore has neither Constitution, By-Laws nor Officers, the sole bond between its Associates being that *basis*. And it aims to disseminate this idea among Theosophists in the furtherance of Unity.

It regards as Theosophists all who are engaged in the true service of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, condition or organization, and

It welcomes to its association all those who are in accord with its declared purposes and who desire to fit themselves, by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and teach others.

"*The true Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect, yet belongs to each and all.*"

Being in sympathy with the purposes of this Lodge, as set forth in its "Declaration," I hereby record my desire to be enrolled as an Associate, it being understood that such association calls for no obligation on my part, other than that which I, myself, determine.

The foregoing is the form signed by Associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists. Inquiries are invited from all persons to whom this Movement may appeal. Cards for signature will be sent upon request, and every possible assistance furnished to Associates in their studies and in efforts to form local Lodges. There are no fees of any kind, and no formalities to be complied with.

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